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C O N F I D E N T I A L HAVANA 017684

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STATE DEPT FOR WHA/CCA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/01/2016

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [SOCI](#) [CU](#)

SUBJECT: CUBAN GOVT DETAINS DISSIDENT DOCTOR DARSÍ FERRER

REF: HAVANA 16867 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: COM Michael E. Parmly for Reason 1.4(d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Around 50 Cuban State Security officers took dissident doctor Darsi Ferrer into custody September 1 and held him at a Havana police station, where, according to his wife, Yusnaimy Jorge, he refused to sign an official warning. The Government accused him of putting up "Cambio" ("Change") stickers at various locations, an accurate accusation. After taking Ferrer into custody at his house, security forces allegedly turned on the gas before closing the door and locking Ferrer's five-year-old son inside. A relative of the boy later rescued him; he was not injured. Ferrer spent the night at a Havana police station before being freed at 8 am and walking home barefoot and shirtless. At 1 pm, after dropping Yusnaimy off at USINT for a visit to an internet center, Ferrer was detained by police, put in a police cruiser and driven away. Other dissidents who watched the detention said it was not violent. Ferrer's whereabouts are currently unknown. Yusnaimy says Ferrer has not scrapped his plan to carry out a 19-person demonstration September 11 or 12, distributing copies of Ferrer's appeal for a plebiscite on the transfer of power. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Dissident Darsi Ferrer, who called on Cubans to defy the Government shortly after the regime announced the power transfer to Raul Castro, was detained by State Security September 1 at his Havana home. His five-year-old son was also at home when around 50 State Security officers, some dressed as ordinary police officers and others as civilians, arrived at the scene shortly after midnight and pounded on the front door with pistol butts. According to neighbors quoted by Yusnaimy, Ferrer, shirtless, opened the door and was immediately taken into custody. Ferrer allegedly asked that a relative be summoned to care for the boy, but according to Yusnaimy, the officers refused, then turned on the gas and closed the door, locking it with the boy still inside. Neighbors quickly tracked down Yusnaimy (who is separated from Ferrer and lives elsewhere in Havana), who returned to find her son all right.

¶3. (C) Not much is known about Ferrer's treatment overnight at a police station in Havana's Lawton neighborhood, other than he was not physically mistreated and refused to sign an "official warning," which states, among other things, that he promises to abide by all laws and rules. Quoting her husband, Yusnaimy said pedestrians looked at Ferrer as a madman as he made a long walk home from the police station, still shirtless and barefoot.

¶4. (C) At around 1 pm, Ferrer accompanied Yusnaimy to USINT, where she had an appointment to visit one of our internet centers. Shortly after she went inside, dissident Daniel Mesa and another human rights activist saw police stop

Ferrer, ask for his ID, then take him into custody. He entered one of two nearby police cars and was driven away.

COMMENT

15. (C) That the Cuban Government waited as long as it did to detain Darsi Ferrer is surprising; perhaps it reflected political instability in the wake of Fidel's temporary handover of power to Raul. Ferrer enjoys popularity in his neighborhood but support will count for nothing if Ferrer is still held on September 11 or 12, when he hopes to demonstrate in Havana for a referendum on the non-democratic transfer of power. Ferrer's "crime" is similar to those committed by currently imprisoned pro-democracy activists; he could be sentenced to upwards of 20 years.

PARMLY